

not see things quite so clearly. They see no wrong with Government. Government could never do anything inefficiently or ill-advised.

Take, for example, on this side of the aisle, there are politicians who want to strengthen Medicare, make it a better program, and allow seniors more choices in making their own health care decisions. On the other side of the aisle we have some politicians who passionately defend the status quo, even though the status quo is 30 years old without revisions. They would rather deny Medicare to those in need down the road than do anything to fix it now.

Mr. Speaker, there is no excuse for this irresponsibility. Medicare is in serious need of reform. Republicans want to fix Medicare and make sure it exists for many years to come.

ATTACKING MEDICARE AT EXPENSE OF SENIORS

(Ms. VELÁZQUEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans' plan to hold just 1 day of hearings on Medicare is an attack on democracy.

I ask where are our priorities? We had 10 days of hearings on Waco and 11 days of hearings on Ruby Ridge so far. Even more alarming, we held over a month of hearings on Whitewater, an issue that most Americans don't care about. Yet, we had only 1 day of hearings for Medicare.

Americans are scared about cuts in Medicare, scared about their future. There should be more than 1 day of hearings on an issue that will affect 37 million seniors. Let's come clean and let Americans know that the real reason Republicans are cutting Medicare by \$270 billion is to fund corporate welfare, defense spending, and tax cuts to the rich—all at the expense of the health and well being of senior citizens.

□ 1215

PROMISES MADE AND PROMISES KEPT

(Mr. RIGGS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, these claims coming from the other side of the aisle would have a little more credence if in fact House Democrats had put forth their own plan for preserving and strengthening Medicare. And let us get one thing straight right now. We have had dozens and dozens of hearings in the House of Representatives on what we must do as a nation to preserve and strengthen Medicare.

I wanted to rise today, though, to point out that 1 year ago I and more than 300 Republican candidates for Congress stood outside the steps of this

historic building and signed our name to a Contract With America. Let me read the very first sentence of the contract: "As Republican Members of the House of Representatives and as citizens seeking to join that body, we propose not just to change its policies, but even more important, to restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected officials."

Mr. Speaker, last January a new majority took control of this House. We came, we saw, and to date we have kept our word. So let us never forget, Mr. Speaker, the power of promises made and the power of promises kept.

ALLOW MEDICARE TRUSTEES TO REVIEW PLANNED CUTS

(Mrs. SCHROEDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, let me answer the prior speaker in the well. The trustees of Medicare said \$89 billion was necessary to fix it, and so they are cutting \$270 billion to save it. They only had 1 day of hearings on this very important issue that affects 37 million people. They have had more hearings on the Chinese prison system that we cannot do anything about from here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that as they wave the trustees report saying they needed to fix it, they better not do anything unless they run the new bill and the new proposal in front of the trustees. That is how we take it out of politics. Take the bill, I say to those on this side of the aisle, take the bill to save Medicare and put it in front of the trustees and see if they believe the \$270 billion are really needed.

I think what is happening here is they are trying to get the cake to the fat cats and the cuts to the middle class.

SUPPORT H.R. 743, TEAM ACT

(Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, when the National Labor Relations Act passed in 1935, the idea of the high performance workplace was an unknown concept. Management either issued orders from on high or bargained with the unions over terms and conditions of employment. Since that time, however, and especially during the last 10 years, the concept of employee involvement has blossomed in workplaces all over America. How ironic, then, that the National Labor Relations Board has determined an employer may solicit employee input on what changes are needed in the workplace but it is illegal for an employer to make changes developed in consultation with employees unless those employees are represented by a union.

Mr. Speaker, why should employees be barred from dealing directly with management? The TEAM Act allows employees and employers to resolve workplace problems through team-based employee involvement and enables American companies to compete in the world marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the TEAM Act.

THE DEBT CEILING

(Mr. DOGGETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, Pat Buchanan's America First campaign, move over. The Speaker is going one better by launching the America Second campaign.

Friday, in New York, he stood, defiant to default. "I don't care what the price is," he proclaimed. "I don't care if we have no executive offices and no bonds for 60 days—not this time."

True, the dollar immediately plunged 5 percent and interest rates shot up. The Wall Street Journal coined a new term, the "Newt Factor." I would call it a "Newtron bomb."

But not to worry. Drive the dollar through the floor, let the interest rates soar, because America and its needs must take second place to the political posturing of the Speaker. America second, NEWT first. That is the spirit of these zealots who say it is NEWT's way or no way.

TEAM ACT DOES NOT APPLY WHERE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ALREADY EXISTS

(Mr. PETRI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, as we enter the debate over the application of the TEAM Act to American workplaces, let's be clear at the outset on one important point.

This bill has no application to companies which currently operate under a collective-bargaining agreement with an organized group of employees.

Opponents of the TEAM Act claim that the bill would let employers undermine established unions by creating workplace committees or sham company unions to take their place. This claim is false. The bill does not address work relationships in union settings.

It only affects employer/employee relations in nonunion settings. The bill would leave untouched restrictions prohibiting employers in unionized settings from dealing directly with employees.

To establish an employee involvement program in a unionized company, the management would still have to work directly through the unions or else be guilty of an unfair labor practice.

The language of the TEAM Act makes it clear that employee teams

are legal only if they do not assume the rule of a labor union.

The TEAM Act thus clearly preserves union veto power over employee involvement.

Please support the TEAM Act when it comes to the floor today.

SUPPORT H.R. 743, THE TEAM ACT, WITHOUT AMENDMENT

(Mr. WELDON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Teamwork Act, and I would like to talk about a particular employee who is somebody who can benefit by this piece of legislation, a fellow by the name of Joe who worked for one of America's largest companies.

It seemed one of their major customers was dissatisfied with the quality of the service and product that was sent to them and was threatening to switch vendors. The employee, Joe, was working in the manufacturing section of the company and it was discovered that Joe was responsible for 73 percent of the defects for his work crew and 50 percent for the entire department. Joe's defect rate was brought up to a team meeting, and the team agreed to support Joe completely and help him find ways of discovering defects earlier and faster. They also discovered a key reason for the high rate of Joe's defects was the amount of socialism between operators.

The team was able to redesign the work area, and the result was they developed a quality ladder with five rungs depicting quality that team members may achieve, and Joe is now at the top of the ladder.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the TEAM Act and urge all my colleagues to support it.

DO NOT RUSH MEDICARE PLAN THROUGH THE HOUSE

(Mr. FORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, the trustees and experts as they relate to the Medicare trust fund have indicated there is only \$98 billion needed in order to bring about the solvency for the Medicare Program, not the \$270 billion that is being proposed by the Republicans. The Republicans are rushing their reckless Medicare plan through the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the only thing we have seen as of today is a 60-page press release.

To increase the Medicare part B premiums on the senior citizens of this country, to double those premiums over the next 6 or 7 years on the seniors who are on fixed, limited incomes is absolutely wrong. I would hope the Republicans would get that message and listen to what Naomi Cutrer said

in the USA Today newspaper yesterday, that it is a shame for the Republicans to rush it through and to add these increases and to bring about this hardship in the Medicare Program.

AMERICANS WANT REAL ANSWERS TO PROBLEMS

(Mr. GUTKNECHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, this past week the Democrats' Special Caucus Task Force on Medicare held a series of mock Medicare hearings. Let us examine the record. Can anyone remember the exact number of Medicare reforms the Democrats Special Task Force on Medicare has proposed? The answer is zippo, zilch, nada, zero, the big goose egg.

Liberals love to pose and posture. They love to pretend and feign concern. One week it is school lunches, the next it is student loans, and now it is Medicare. But the routine is pretty predictable. They distort the Republican position and make us look like monsters, but then they never propose any solutions for their own to deal with whatever the problem is.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are completely fed up with this style of leadership. They want real answers to the real problems faced by their Government. They do not want mock hearings or mock concern about Medicare.

SAVE HEALTH CARE BENEFITS FOR COAL MINERS

(Mr. POSHARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, we have over 100,000 retired coal miners in America today, men and women who for 25, 30, even for 40 years exposed themselves to great danger to provide for the energy needs of America.

In 1946 this Congress, working with the coal companies, developed a health care plan to make sure these miners would be provided adequate health care in their later years. But over the years many companies refused to honor their obligations to contribute to the employer funded UMW health and retirement funds, creating a crisis which threatened the health and security of well over 100,000 retirees.

This Congress responded, and in 1992 we enacted the Coal Industry Retiree Health Benefits Act to make sure companies paid their fair share, to make sure that health care for current and retired coal miners would be preserved for now and in the future.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, that act was overturned in the Ways and Means Committee, leaving these miners to face an uncertain future with regard to their health care. This is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and I plead with this Congress not to enact this act.

SUPPORT H.R. 743, THE TEAM ACT

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, should cooperation between employees and employers be illegal? Today, 88 percent of the private sector work force cannot influence the terms and conditions of their employment by sitting down as a group with management and sharing ideas on improving the company. Those 88 percent are nonunionized workers, and it is illegal for employees and an employer to work together to resolve workplace issues using committees or teams that fall within the definition of a labor organization, unless those employees are represented by a union.

An employer can have a suggestion box or hold a conference to discuss ideas in the abstract with employees, but it is illegal for an employer to follow through on any of these activities with actual workplace changes that are developed in consultation with the employees, unless those workers are represented by a union.

The TEAM Act would give nonunion employees the same right as union employees—the right to work with the employer to resolve workplace issues. Join me in supporting H.R. 743, the TEAM Act so that all employees are fairly treated and able to participate in the process of workplace improvement.

WHAT ARE REPUBLICANS HIDING?

(Mr. LEWIS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting to see the details of how the Republicans will cut \$270 billion from Medicare. The Ways and Means Committee held one—only one—hearing. Even after that hearing, we do not know how they will cut Medicare. We do not have a bill.

It is a shame and disgrace that we are shut out of the process, and the details are carefully guarded from us. This is an affront—not just to Democrats, not just to Members of Congress, but to our senior citizens and the American people.

Mr. Speaker, it was Robert Frost who said, "When you build a wall, who are you trying to fence out?"

So I ask, Why is there only one hearing on this very important plan? What do my colleagues have to hide?

Do not hide the plan. Hold hearings. Let the American people be a part of this process.

□ 1230

REPUBLICANS DEDICATED TO PROMISES OF THE CONTRACT WITH AMERICA

(Mrs. SEASTRAND asked and was given permission to address the House